

PREY

Design Document
CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENT
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Overview

Based on an original concept by 3DRealms, Human Head Studios plans to make *Prey* a must-have product when it hits the shelves. Though the conventions of the first person shooter are well established, Human Head Studios plans to bring innovative new ideas to the genre, while also expanding upon the tried and true features of FPS games that the fans clamor for. It is our intention to make *Prey* the gaming equivalent of a summer blockbuster- the game that die hard fans MUST buy and play.

We have two goals for *Prey*:

- 1- **Make *Prey* THE most desired game on the market upon its release**
- 2- **Make a first person shooter that takes the genre to the next level**

Design and Production Plan

Initial design work for *Prey* has begun and is being carried out in three phases with the purpose of creating a production level design by the end of the third phase. Each phase will build upon the last, narrowing the focus, weeding out the bad concepts, and developing the good until this pre-production portion of the schedule is completed. The phases will commence as follows:

Phase I (Current Milestone)- Blue Sky

This is the phase where we played and discussed lots of games from both the FPS and other popular genres. During this phase we entertained all manner of crazy ideas, and considered concepts and elements from non-FPS genres in an attempt to expand the boundaries of the 'standard' shooter game. The concepts and ideas raised during this period are listed within this document.

Due Date: May 15th Milestone

Phase II- Design Planning

During this next phase, we have weeded out the concepts that are either unworkable, or just plain bad, while expanding on the concepts that show the most promise for broadening the FPS genre. During this stage we have begun to develop the initial outline and concept art for the story, characters, enemies and weapons that will make up *Prey*.

Due Date: July 1st Milestone

Phase III- Design Focus

During this last phase of the initial design, we will codify the best concepts and ideas for the game into the Production Design. It is the design document that will result from this phase that will serve as the skeleton and bible from which *Prey* is

crafted. Refined and detailed concept art for the creation of levels, characters, enemies, weapons and objects for the game will be crafted during this period.

Due Date: August 15th Milestone

As stated above, with *Prey* Human Head will seek to expand and innovate the FPS genre. Innovative concepts are new concepts, and new concepts need to be proven. To this end, we plan on a production process that follows the above design phases to allow for regular test beds and prototypes, so that concepts can be tested as often as possible, and feedback given.

Story

At this stage, the story of *Prey* remains in the high concept stage, consisting mainly of elements that are influencing and focusing other aspects of design. Currently the “summer blockbuster” banner is held up to represent our desire to make *Prey* an intense, high-octane experience.

The basic storyline is heavily influenced by the original 3DRealms plan, but the specifics are being fleshed out for completion by Milestone 3. At its basic level, his plot involves a race of aliens who are collecting innumerable specimens from different species and bringing them into a small-scale Dyson Sphere (an artificial sphere, at the center of which rests an artificial star that creates energy and heat for the inhabitants).

Into this environment is thrown the player(s)/hero(es), who is thrust into this strange alien world with only his wits to survive. Though in any first-person game it is the player who defines the majority of the protagonist through their actions and choices, there are a few personality traits we hope to get across. First is that he’s a reluctant hero, but brave and determined once he has committed to his role in this strange, new world—he didn’t choose to be captured by the aliens, but damn it, he’s going to get out alive! Next is that though he’s tough enough to gun down thousands of enemies in the course of the game, he still has a sense of humor and will be likeable to players. Finally is a growing sense of confidence through the game—by the final battle, he will no longer be a reluctant hero; instead he will have embraced his role.

The mood of the game will also be a big factor in *Prey*’s success. We plan to place *Prey* firmly on the border between science fiction and horror, creating a world bright with SF’s sense of wonder, yet one with dark shadows where moments of terror can lie in wait for the unsuspecting player. We will put them at the edge of their seat one moment, have them scream at their machine the next, and then bring them back down so that we can start the cycle all over again. The idea is to keep the player on an emotional, and unpredictable, roller coaster. So as to not drown the player in an oppressively dark game, there will be elements of humor sprinkled throughout the experience to lighten the mood, bringing players back down before scaring the pants off of them.

Platform

The current focus for the game is to lead with the PC version of the game while also planning for a next generation console version to be determined later. Though the primary hurdles this will create are technological, there will be creative aspects to keep in mind as well. We will strive to minimize the impact on the game schedule by keeping an eye towards simplifying the control scheme while still allowing for maximum interactivity. A simple control scheme will require minimum 'rethinking' of the controls for each platform.

However, we also intend to leverage the strengths of each platform. The console systems tend to allow for a greater array of visual effects that would stall a PC, while also requiring a faster auto-aiming scheme to make controls palatable. PCs by nature allow for a much more robust multiplayer game structure, while also allowing for complete freedom of control. These are factors that we will keep in mind while developing this game across both platforms.

Gameplay

By examining what makes other popular games, past and present tick, we have come up with the following topics we are working on for possible inclusion in the final *Prey* design:

Contextual Action

This concept embodies two elements- first the idea of LOTS of interactivity throughout the game, from being able to open blinds or play an alien video game to creating elaborate traps for enemies using parts found lying around on the station. The interactivity should be equally as compelling as the shooting, in a way that the player WANTS to stop shooting and interact with the environment.

The second element of this concept is that the action should be meaningful- that the action is a part of the story, rather than a half-hour of random shooting between plot points. Ideally, if a player's choices in the action might come back to haunt him in the story—if he kills too many of a particular type of enemy, the entire class of enemy may begin to hold a grudge against him...

Enemies

With a few exceptions, the enemies in *Prey* will be aliens, members of other races or mechanical monstrosities that have been taken aboard the Sphere by its strange overlords. This allows for a wonderful freedom of which Human Head plans to take full advantage. Enemies may be able to run on the ceiling, blend into the walls, and more. Well-designed creatures with strong AI, allowing for a wide

variety of unique movements and attacks, will create a stable of opponents that the player will both fear and respect.

NPCs

Non-enemy NPCs will appear in sufficient numbers to make the world of *Prey* seem populated and vital, yet efforts will be made to ensure that all NPCs play a useful role beyond window-dressing.

NPC's will be used to both add depth to the game, and to help advance the action of the game. Early in the game, the player will meet NPC's who can provide helpful information about surroundings. Some NPC's will advise the player or suggest objectives for the player to pursue. At later stages, some of these NPC's may be part of a mission objective themselves (e.g. a rescue mission)

Environment

The idea of an artificial environment created by aliens can encompass nearly anything imaginable, and numerous ideas are under consideration.

Environments being discussed include:

- A human space station, being dissected by the Sphere's construction robots;
- Alien arenas and hunting preserves, where the player will experience both sides of the predator-prey relationship;
- An alien incubator, a giant sphere of fluid suspended in a field full of embryonic forms zealously guarded by their progenitors;
- Automated laboratories pursuing a series of terrible experiments on a multitude of races...including humans;
- Docking towers high above the surface of the sphere, where transport and freight craft make stops and receive maintenance;
- Zero-G areas near the outer skin of the Dyson Sphere, which include docking facilities for interstellar craft, salvage areas full of drifting chunks of decommissioned spacecraft, and areas open to space where the Sphere is being repaired;
- An abandoned archive from which the player can learn more about the mysteries of the Sphere;
- A 'Dreamwalk' environment, where the protagonist walks the land of Native American myth to receive guidance and counsel from his ancestors.

Another concept being discussed is giving the player limited control over the environment, via a control unit they can discover and then use at interface points around the Sphere. The unit would enable control of lights, temperature, gravity in certain areas, and possibly atmospheric composition or containment force

fields. The only way to lose pursuers might be to find an environmental interface and turn out the lights, or turn up (or down) the heat. The only way to escape suffocating might be to plug in and adjust the atmosphere to one breathable by humans.

As the world of *Prey* becomes more complex, a concept being investigated at the design stage is how to incorporate automapping into the game, ala *Dark Forces* or *Thief*.

Multiplayer Modes and Co-Op

One area where *Prey*'s simultaneous development for the PC and console environments will have to be kept most in mind is the area of multiplayer gaming. Discussion continues on the best way to provide the game with a strong and involving multiplayer component.

We have decided to focus on cooperative play as our primary multiplayer mode. FPS fans have been clamoring games with a good cooperative mode. Our intent is to plan the cooperative mode alongside the single player mode, to ensure that co-op is a unique experience which is just as compelling as the single player game.

Elaboration on plans and enhancements for cooperative play will appear in the production design document.

Deathmatch modes will also be included in *Prey*, although variations such as "Capture the Flag" have not been determined yet.

Collectibles & Economy

We intend to construct an economic system for *Prey* which will allow the player to collect items from locales explored, and from fallen foes, which can be exchanged for other goods which the player may deem more desirable. This will take one of two forms.

- Possibility #1: an "underground" where the player can interact with NPC's to exchange items or loot for better weapons, armor, etc
- Possibility #2: an automated system of machines which analyze items for their elemental value and offer other items which can be created for the player – in essence a matter conversion machine.

In addition to this economic system, as the player progresses through the game, a reward system will provide many items that the player will want to keep. These include new weapons, special weapons upgrades (see Weapon Modifications

below), armor, and special gadgets that give the player new abilities (e.g. jetpack, environmental control unit, special vision goggles, etc.)

Power Ups

Long a staple of old style action shooters such as *Raiden*, *1942*, *Darius* and *Nemesis*, the concept of the power up has all but disappeared in the FPS genre. This idea, tied also to the idea of weapon modifications below, is one we want to make substantial use of. Power ups would give the player a massive, short-duration boost firepower. Our implementation will include the use of spectacular visual effects for the power ups, in the tradition of old arcade shooters. Used properly, it would add immensely to the visual prowess of the game, as well as increase the players' sense of empowerment in the game world.

Special Abilities

Playable characters will also have their own innate special abilities that will help to make them truly heroic. This will also help to make cooperative play more interesting, as individual players will have a special set of abilities distinct from other players. Many ideas are being discussed, from the ability to summon a spectral bird to the ability to temporarily stop time. There is the possibility that some of the many abilities being discussed (the stop time ability, for example) may only be technically possible in singleplayer mode, and the special abilities category may further help singleplayer from co-op.

The player need not be alone in his quest. This concept is that the player can commune, and possibly even transform into an animal of some sort. This spirit totem could offer assistance and advice to the player in proceeding through the game, or simply serve as another means with which to interact with, or attack, opponents in the world. This totem could also advance as the player gains power- for instance a Totem Bird that allows the player at first to gain an aerial visual of the level for a few seconds, but eventually allowing the player to transform into the bird and allow him to fly across complex areas.

Additional powers: we are discussing other powers and special abilities that the player will gain as the game progresses. It is yet to be determined what these are and whether they will be connected with a spirit animal.

Replayability

Imagine the replayability of sports and driving games brought to the FPS genre. The popular nature of these games cannot be denied, and as such, deserves evaluation as to how the core elements can be carried over to *Prey*. The keys elements of these genres lie in the customizability of players/vehicles, environments and length of play. These core elements carried over to the FPS

genre can result in a mega hit, as was proven with *CounterStrike*, the most widely played game on the Internet.

Following is a detailed examination of elements which will expand the possibilities for replayability in Prey.

Open World

Especially intriguing when viewed from the perspective of our proposed focus on a cooperative multiplayer mode is the concept of the world that you can explore however you wish, and one where you can return to previously explored zones rather than closing off access to previously explored levels. However, there needs to be a reason to go back to previously explored levels, and that can come from such complex concepts as adding economy and collectibles to the world, or with simpler concepts such as areas of the world that were previously blocked, but now are open due to a player action, or via acquiring a new skill or power. If players do go back, it would be desirable to change the enemies encountered in previously explored regions, and to alter their purpose for being there.

To make an open world manageable from a story and logistics standpoint, the game will be divided into multiple 'hubs' of a central level connected to 8-10 levels. When the objectives for a hubbed area have been completed, the story will move the players into the next area. It is expected that the game will consist (depending on the size of the setup and endgame areas) of two to three hubs.

Skills/Attributes (Action RPG elements)

The ability to improve or add to ones skills is a common element in popular action role-playing games such as *Zelda* and action –adventures such as *Deus Ex*. The concept can be as simple as gaining a new type of movement ability through the world (higher or long jumps for example) that grant access to areas previously blocked to the player, or a full blown stat system that allows players to endlessly play with numbers as they attempt to improve their odds in the game.

Weapon Modifications-

The original concept for this was taken from the idea of Materia, as presented in SquareSoft's *Final Fantasy VII*. The idea is that you can add some tech modification to a weapon and alter its function--changing a machine gun into a machine gun that shoot flaming bullets, for example. We are continuing to brainstorm this concept to explore the possibilities of this concept.

Modifications of weapons would be permanent, unlike the power ups discussed above. The weapon in the player view would show the modification in some way, and visual effects would accompany the modification, showing off its new power.

Game Length and Replayability

While well-designed multiplayer modes do much to create longevity for a game, the vast amount of work that goes into creating a game's single-player mode is often seen only once by a player.

In an attempt to rectify this lop-sided approach to development, Human Head is discussing limiting the length of the singleplayer game to 12-14 hours (as opposed to the 35-40 hours of our last major release, *Rune*.) If that decision is made, however, all efforts will be made to encourage play of *Prey*'s singleplayer mode several times, and to increasing the amount of activity in the game tenfold. The goal is to create less real estate with far more to do. This will allow us to perhaps get more hours out of less geometry. Methods through which this might be accomplish include:

- Giving the player control over major elements of the storyline
- Missions or levels that are either optional or don't always appear depending on player choices
- Missions that can be solved any of several methods available to the player (stealth, all-out-assault, etc.)
- Tighter player control over how they play they game (ala the potential customizable weapons discussed in the previous section)
- Denying access to certain parts of a level that require later skills or abilities to enter

However, a game that is replayable means nothing if the player doesn't *know* that it's replayable. Thus, it should be clear to players when they are making important decisions that the alternatives might lead to a different gameplay experience. Discussion continues on how to implement this, potentially via a post-game-completion 'trailer' showing events and aspects missed due to a player's gameplay.

Another important corollary to the decision to make the single player game shorter is that it will also allow the team to have a tighter focus on the multiplayer aspect of the game, in order to ensure that this aspect of the game is as strong as possible. We are intent on making the cooperative multiplayer mode fresh and interesting – similar to the single player experience, but with additional challenges and special scenarios.

Audience

Prey is aimed squarely at the 17 and older, mostly male, action gaming crowd. These are the guys who have the money to spend and the free time to spend it on. They're the guys who have to have the latest, the greatest and the best hardware and games. They're manly geeks whose favorite movie lists don't include any

chick flicks, but do include liberal doses of violence and fast action. These are the summer blockbuster fans who love games like Unreal, Quake and Doom.

Critical Success Factors

There are a number of factors that will be key to the success of *Prey*:

- Frame rate, frame rate, frame rate;
- Tight, easy to use controls;
- Beautiful visual design in levels;
- Kick-ass weapons with visually stunning effects;
- Fast gameplay in single- and multi-player games.

Rating

Prey will be a game of fast combat and violent action. Mixed with intended moments of horror, we expect to create a game that will fall into the M-17 rating category or above. This will be a violent game, with violent and terrifying scenes.

Media

Prey is designed for release on the DVD media offered by the next generation console game systems. We intend to use the space available in order to create stunning visuals and studio quality audio. We intend for the PC version of *Prey* to also be a DVD release. Just as *Myst* was the game that made people run out and buy a CD-ROM, and *Wing Commander* was the game that made people run out and buy a 386, we intend *Prey* to be the game that justifies the purchase of a DVD-ROM. A sizable chunk of existing PCs sold today already have DVD-ROM players on board, and fully expect that percentage to climb by the time *Prey* is released.

Should a PC DVD-ROM release prove impractical, we will, of course, examine the possibilities for release on multiple CDs.

Staffing

Human Head staff taking part in the design phase for *Prey* are as follows:

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| Project Lead (Producer): | Timothy Gerritsen |
| Design Lead (Director): | Chris Rhinehart |
| Art Lead: | Rowan Atalla |
| Design Assistant: | Seth Johnson |
| Programming Lead: | Paul MacArthur |
| Programmers: | Aaron Bahr, Toby Jones, Mike Craddick, |

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|--------------------------------|---|
| Level Designers: | Chris Rhinehart Mike Flynn, Brian Frank, JP LeBreton, Ted Halsted, Mick Beard |
| Modelers and Animators: | James Sumwalt, Shane Gurno, Nate Albright, Jeff Dewitt |
| Environmental Textures: | Greg Marshall, Eli Quinn |
| Music and Audio: | Mike Larson |

At this time, with Rune PS2 winding down, the team has become a bit more complete. Though Mike Craddick and Aaron Bahr will still be assigned duties on the PAL and translation duties of Rune PS2, they take on more duties for Prey. This list represents a fully staffed team, though we may continue to shuffle some people around depending on internal needs.